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Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 12 December 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the letter (A/60/571) from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations and to state the following:

I.

On 10 November 2005, at the 26th meeting of the Second Committee, the delegation of Azerbaijan made a joint statement on behalf of Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan under agenda item 55 (b)[1] informing the Committee of the joint efforts towards implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The statement focused on the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku new railway connection project and clearly outlined the goals and objectives of the project, as set out in the declaration by the Presidents of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Turkey on the project.[2] The declaration, inter alia, underlines that the participating States have proceeded from "mutual interest in the development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor for the improvement of the transport infrastructure within the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) on the basis of the revival of the historic silk route".

At the 27th meeting of the Committee, the delegation of Armenia, exercising its right of reply,[3] accused the participating States of being exclusively politically

[1] *Journal of the United Nations*, No. 2005/219, p. 14.
[2] A/60/419.
[3] *Journal of the United Nations*, No. 2005/219, p. 15.

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motivated in the construction of this connection. Subsequently, the delegation of Azerbaijan exercised its right to reply. The delegation of Armenia did not use its right of reply for the second time, and now it has come with "clarification" of "a number of unsubstantiated allegations".

As always, we have faced the standard Armenian practice of misquotation and an attempt to capitalize on that. For the sake of accuracy, the joint statement made on behalf of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and the statement in exercise of the right of reply of the delegation of Azerbaijan, which were submitted to the Secretariat of the Committee, are attached and are self-explanatory (see annex I and annex II).

II.

One should realize that non-participation of a State in a project cannot constitute an irrefutable argument against that project. Furthermore, the existence of any infrastructure should not prevent the further development of the transport corridors and network in the region and cannot be used as a basis for prohibiting the sovereign States to participate in new projects or initiatives.

The approach of Armenia to the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku project continues its policy and practices of obstruction of another regional project, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil export pipeline, which has been developing successfully.

As far as "genuine regional cooperation with the participation of all countries" is concerned, it requires, first and foremost, genuine commitment to respect jus cogens principles, such as territorial integrity and the sovereignty of any State. Ironically, Armenia views respect for these principles as "excessive political concessions". Therefore, the Armenian side should reconcile with and live up to its own "conscious political decision" that has pre-ordained subsequent developments in the region.

Azerbaijan, within its capacities, has made and continues to make its contribution to the promotion of regional cooperation and partnership initiatives. However, evidently, Azerbaijan will never be engaged in any kind of cooperation with the State that occupies a vast portion of its territory, a fact that in no way contributes to stability and prosperity in the South Caucasus.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Azerbaijan's position that respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States, and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations are the only way to achieve lasting peace and security in the region, which is a fundamental condition for regional cooperation with the participation of all countries in the region.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes were, as a matter of urgency, distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 55 (b).

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I to the letter dated 12 December 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement made at the 26th meeting of the Second Committee, on 10 November 2005, by Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations under agenda item 55 (b)

Mr. Chairman:

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Georgia, Turkey and my own country, Azerbaijan, on agenda item 55 (b), entitled "Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation".

Mr. Chairman:

Our countries are committed to the development of an efficient transit transport system in the region. Transregional infrastructure remains our top priority for medium- and long-term cooperation perspectives. We wish to inform the Committee of our efforts towards the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

We emphasize the importance of the establishment of the regional transport network for close cooperation in the field of trade-economic relations aimed at ensuring sustainable development and security within the South Caucasus region, as well as Eurasia as a whole.

We have proceeded from mutual interest in the development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor for the improvement of the transport infrastructure within the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia on the basis of the revival of the historic silk route.

On 25 May 2005, Presidents of Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a joint declaration on the "Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku new railroad connection" project. The declaration mentions that "the new railway connection project being implemented in the context of the European neighbourhood policy is the key link of the East-West energy transport corridor and, along with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the South Caucasian Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, will promote the economic growth, stability and welfare increase in the region".

For the time being, certain engineering and technical works on the Kars-Akhalkalaki section of the project are expected to be finalized by the end of 2005. Following the completion of the working draft, the construction of the railroad connection will begin by mid-2006.

Thus, the connection of the railroads of Turkey and Georgia as well as the construction of the railway tunnel under the Bosporus Strait will ensure an unimpeded movement of carriages from Europe to all countries of the region and vice-versa.

The project has a key role to play in the process of integration with the trans-European railway network. Environmentally sound and economically viable, this project is being developed at a time of rapidly growing international trade and rising transport flows by States of the region that are willing to find an operational transport network capable to meet these needs.

Mr. Chairman:

The efforts by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe towards the realization of the project so far are valuable and highly commendable. As a next crucial step, the incorporation of all sections of the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railway connection into the trans-European railway network master plan is expected.

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey strongly believe that the participation of regional and international institutions and structures, other countries and investors interested in its promotion and financing is of paramount importance and would serve mutual benefit.

Thank you.

Annex II to the letter dated 12 December 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Right of reply of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan Second Committee, agenda item 55 (b) 10 November 2005

My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply as the name of my country has been mentioned in the statement of the last speaker.

Before reflecting on specific points raised, I would like to state my delegation has no intention to offer any justification and simply would like to re-state its position, although it was clearly outlined in the joint statement delivered in this very Committee early this morning.

First and foremost, while declaring that Armenia has advocated development of regional cooperation, it would be advisable to add that these declarations have been accompanied by the policy of aggression against and occupation of territory of other sovereign State, namely Azerbaijan.

Secondly, I am pleased to stress that Azerbaijan reaffirms its commitment towards implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and fully respects its principles and goals, including those related to the respect for the principle of friendly relations among States; the latter obviously has been effaced from the institutional memory of Armenia.

Thirdly, with regard to the "Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railway connection" I would like to highlight that Azerbaijan attaches a great importance to regional economic cooperation and actively participates in transregional infrastructure initiatives. Hence, we are committed to the implementation of this project.

This project has appeared as a response of the States of the region to the needs of growing international trade, as a result of a normal search for an operational transport network capable of absorbing rising transport flows. Apart from safety, security and speed advantages, a considerable part of this route is standard gauged. Economically viable, the project perfectly compliments the new geopolitical formation of the European continent by offering an alternative rail link to Asia. Crucially, the project is also environmentally sound due to its nature as a railroad, and when it is completed, it will alleviate traffic in the Bosporus Strait.

Having said this, I would like to stress that this project is based on economic interest and by no means is directed against any other State. Thus, we are disappointed that Armenia views the efforts of neighbouring States to promote regional development and growth as an ostensible attempt to isolate her.

However, if the Armenian delegation, from its own perspective, complains about the isolation of its country from development and cooperation processes taking place in the region, perhaps instead of hurling accusations against neighbour countries, it would be better to face the truth and realize that Armenia with its so-called "geostrategic location" opted out from these development processes, as it prefers the position of the occupying power. Armenia sticks to this policy

notwithstanding the detrimental impact of occupation policy on the development of its own population. Obviously, the welfare of the region was arid and still is completely out of consideration.

Reality shows that for Azerbaijan, despite its being landlocked, Armenia does not represent the only way out. If the latter is pressed by development problems, it would be useful to reconsider its foreign policy and be a genuine partner for development by not violating the borders of another sovereign State and occupying some 20 per cent of its territory for more than a decade.